GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:6411
ANSWERED ON:08.05.2002
FOREIGN MINISTER S OVERSEAS TOUR
CHANDRESH PATEL KORDIA

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether he visited several countries in March-April, 2002;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the details of dignitaries he met alongwith negotiations held and agreements signed in each country; and

(d) the benefits likely to be accrued to India therefrom?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH)

(a): Yes, Sir. External Affairs Minister visited China, Republic of Korea, Thailand and Myanmar from March 29 - April 06, 2002.

(b)-(d) China

External Affairs Minister (EAM) met Foreign Minister Tang Jiaxuan and Mr. Dai Bingguo, Minister, International Department of the CPC. He also called on Vice Premier Qian Qichen and Premier Zhu Rongji.

Issues discussed during the visit of EAM to China included visit of Prime Minister to China, trade and economic cooperation, tourism and provision for hydrological data pertaining to the Brahamaputra river during flood season.

Both sides agreed to exchange maps of the LAC in the Western Sector at the next (12th) Expert Group Meeting in Beijing in June 2002. Both sides will also do their best to complete the exchange of maps of the LAC in the Western Sector by the end of 2002, and will then begin the exchange of maps of the LAC in the Eastern Sector early next year.

During the talks between Prime Minister and Premier Zhu Rongji in January in New Delhi both sides had agreed to establish a bilateral dialogue mechanism on counter terrorism. During EAM`s visit both sides agreed that these talks would be held annually, and the first meeting was held in New Delhi on 23rd April, 2002.

Republic of Korea

EAM called on President Kim Dae Jung and had discussions with his counterpart Foreign Minister Choi Sung-hong.

In External Affairs Minister`s discussion with Foreign Minister Choi, both agreed on strengthening bilateral relations, including through more frequent high level political and parliamentary exchanges; wider exchanges and contacts in defence matters; cooperation against terrorism and on security issues and cooperation at international forums including the United Nations.

The first meeting of the India-ROK Joint Commission at the Ministerial level was also held. Discussions covered trade and investment issues including cooperation in infrastructure projects, civil aviation, information technology and communication, culture and science & technology. Agreed minutes were signed. The next meeting of the India-ROK Joint Commission will be held early next year in New Delhi.

Thailand

EAM called on Prime Minister Dr. Thaksin Shinawatra and held discussions with Dr. Surakiart Sathirathai, Foreign Minister of Thailand.

Issues discussed during the visit included deepening and strengthening of bilateral relations and international matters of mutual interest.

Myanmar

EAM attended the India-Myanmar-Thailand Ministerial Meeting on Transport Linkages held on April 5-6, 2002 in Myanmar.The three Foreign Ministers discussed a wide range of issues pertaining to development of transport linkages inter-connecting the three countries focusing on construction of a new highway through Myanmar. Such a network would promote trade, investment, tourism and people-to-people interaction amongst the three countries and promote cooperation between South Asia and South-East Asia.The meeting agreed on following areas of cooperation:

(i) Construction of a highway from Moreh in India to Mae Sot in Thailand through Bagan in Myanmar.

(ii) Construction of a highway from Kanchanaburi in Thailand to Dawei deep sea port in Myanmar and shipping links to sea ports in India as part and parcel of one integrated project.

(iii) Promotion of trade investment and tourism through facilitation of transit of goods and people across the border.

(iv) Cooperation in human resource development.

Two task forces have been set up for implementation of this project, the one on financing to be chaired by Thailand and the one on technical matters to be chaired by India. The two task forces are now expected to meet on May 9, 2002 in Yangon to hold discussions.

While in Myanmar, EAM also called on Secretary I, Lt. Gen. Khin Nyunt.